CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Easement application- buried fiber optic cable
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer/Fall 2017
Proponent:	3 Rivers Communications Inc., PO Box 429, Fairfield, MT 59436
Location:	Sec. 16, T22N, R5W
County:	Teton
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

3 Rivers Communications has requested to install a buried fiber optic cable to service a Mobile Communications / T-Mobile Cell site. The proposed easement route is located just off of the edge of the existing access road. The fiber optic cable will be buried 42" deep and will be installed using a vibratory plow. The easement will be 20.00' wide.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

3 Rivers Communications Inc.-Proponent
DNRC-Surface Owner
Gollehn Ranch Surface Lessees, Lease #2122

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Deny 3 Rivers Telephone Communications Inc. permission to install the buried fiber optic cable.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant 3 Rivers Communications Inc. permission to install the buried fiber optic cable.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Soils at the proposed project site are silty in texture and contain a high percentage of gravel. The topography is flat and the fiber optic cable will be installed along an existing access road. These soils and slopes are generally

suitable for the installation of the buried fiber optic cable. Equipment will cause localized areas of soil compaction and will disturb the soil were the buried fiber optic cable is being placed. Reclamation requirements are to compact, level and reseed disturbed areas to stabilize soils. Cumulative impacts on soil resources are not expected as the use of a vibratory plow will minimize the surface disturbance caused by the construction project.

5. **WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:**
   Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

Water quality and/or quantity will not be impacted by the proposed action.

6. **AIR QUALITY:**
   What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

The proposed action will not impact the air quality.

7. **VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:**
   What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Vegetation will be minimally impacted from the installation of the fiber line and the manipulation of equipment on the ground surface. The vegetation consists primarily of native species. Noxious and annual weeds within the proposed construction areas are a concern, but this concern will be mitigated into the future from weed control within the construction areas by the applicant. Cumulative impacts on the vegetative resources are not expected as the proposed construction areas will be reclaimed and reseeded. The reseeding mixture will consist of a grass seed mixture of 35% Western Wheatgrass, 35% Slender Wheatgrass, 15% Bluebunch Wheatgrass, 10% Green Needle grass, and 5% Lewis blue flax. If drilled the rate will be 8#/acre, but if broadcast seeded, the rate will be doubled.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted for T25N, R5W: There were no plant species of concern noted or potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.

8. **TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:**
   Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

This area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, this tract provides habitat for a variety of big game species (mule deer, whitetail deer, and pronghorn antelope), predators (coyote, fox, and badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds. The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover. Wildlife usage is expected to return to "normal" (pre-action usage) following the installation of the buried fiber optic cable. The proposed action will not have long-term negative effects on existing wildlife species and/or wildlife habitat.

9. **UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:**
   Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

This parcel is located in the NCD grizzly bear recovery zone. Grizzly bears and/or associated habitat will not be impacted by the proposed project. Threatened or endangered species, sensitive habitat types, or other species of special concern or potential species of concern will not be impacted by proposal.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted for T22N, R5Wand the McCown's Longspur was listed as an animal species of concern.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

The proposed route was inspected on foot and one arlecheaological feature (stone circle) was observed along the proposed route. The general project area was inventoried to Class III standards in 1995 by HRA of Missoula. During the course of investigations, a single stone circle (24TT271) was identified and formally documented. Impacts to the stone circle can be avoided during installation of a proposed fiber optic cable if the cable route is positioned between the access road and the irrigation ditch. Both the irrigation ditch and access road are located immediately south of the stone circle comprising site 24TT271. The stone circle will be flagged and avoided

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Installation of the buried fiber optic cable will not affect the long term aesthetics of the land.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed action. The proposed action will not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed project.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tract listed on this EA.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

The proposed project will not change human safety in the area.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The results of this project will not affect the industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities or production in the area.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

This project will not create any new jobs, as the project will be completed in house by the proponent.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

The proposed action will add to the tax revenue.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

This project is of a small scale and being funded by 3 Rivers Communications Inc. There will be no excessive stress placed of the existing infrastructure of the area.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

The proposed action is in compliance with State and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

This tract of state land is legally accessible. The proposed action is not expected to impact general recreational and wilderness activities on these state tracts.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments. No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed action will not impact the cultural uniqueness or diversity of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Common School Trust will be compensated at fair market value for the easement. Cumulative impacts are not likely as the area is only used for grazing and the buried fiber optic cable will not affect the long-term viability of the tracts.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Erik Eneboe	**Date:** August 2017
	Title: Conrad Unit Manager, Conrad Unit, Central Land Office	

V. FINDINGS

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

ALTERNATIVE B - GRANT 3 RIVER COMMUNICATIONS PERMISSION TO INSTALL BURIED FIBER OPTIC

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

X No SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [X] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Martin Balukas
	Title:	Trust Lands Program Manager, CLO
Signature:		**Date:** 10/2/17